

IN THESE TIMES



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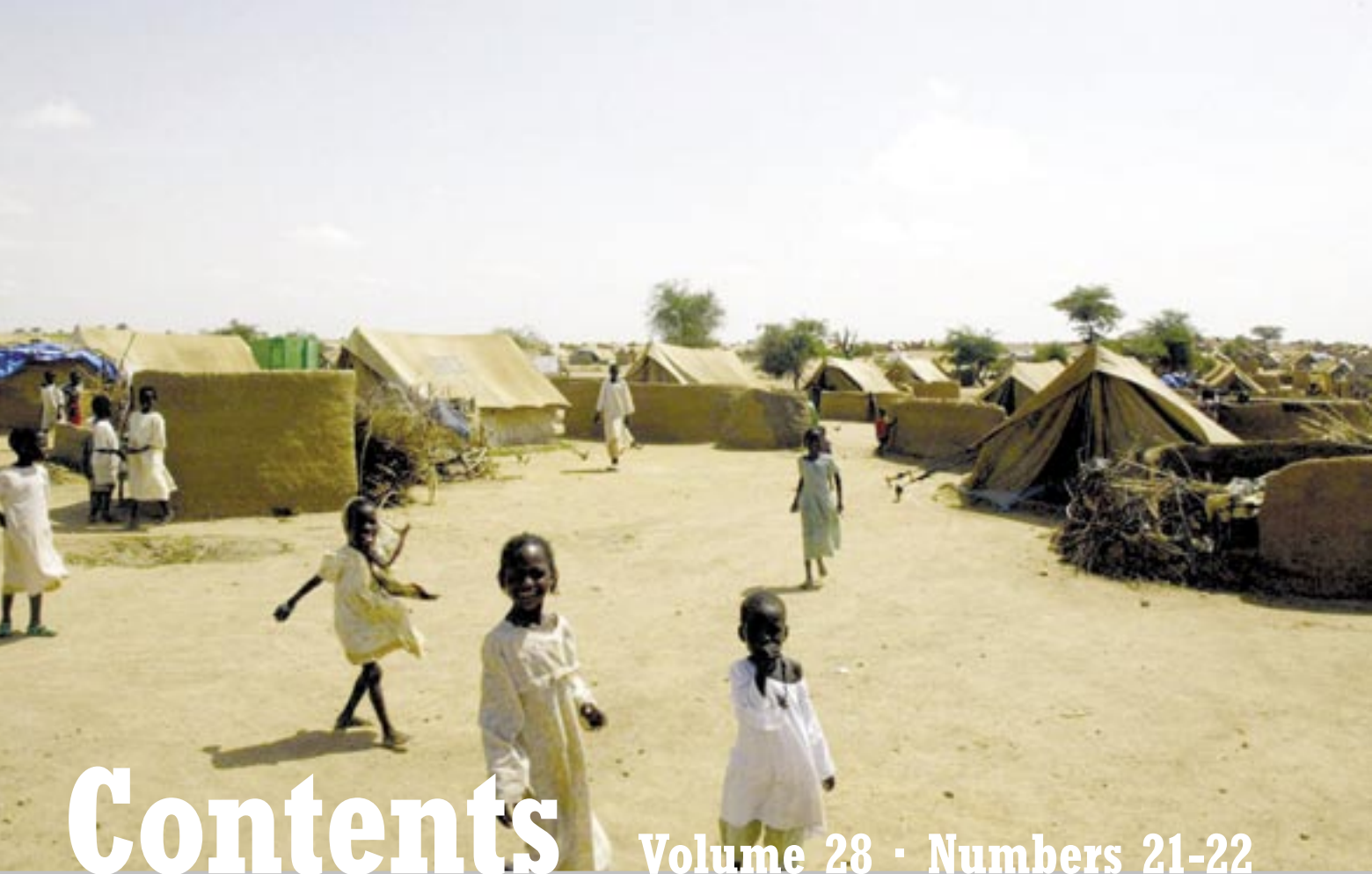
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What on earth happened to the Republican Party?

“I believe in the division of labor.
You send us to Congress;
we pass laws under which you make
money ... and out of your profits,
you further contribute to our
campaign funds to send us back
again to pass more laws to enable
you to make more money.”

SEN. BOIES PENROSE, (R-PENN.), 1896



Editorial

The Grand Delusion By Cynthia Moothart

George W. Bush shamelessly boasts that he doesn't read. Of newspapers he said: "I glance at the headlines just to kind of [get] a flavor of what's moving. I rarely read the stories. ...

[I] get briefed by people who probably read the news themselves ... people on my staff who tell me what's happening in the world." Apparently, he also resists film.

A war waged on behalf of corporate cronies at the expense of working Americans recalls the lessons embedded in Jean Renoir's 1937 classic *Le Grande Illusion*.

Filmed after one world war and under the threat of another, *Grande Illusion* served as a haunting elegy for the tragedy of battle and as a cautionary tale of its immeasurable toll. Exploring the profound social and political change of the interwar years—the erosion of inherited privilege and the resulting power shift toward the working class—the grand illusion of Renoir's title is the notion that plutocrats can stand above and beyond the wars they create.

Using aristocratic connections Bush was able to elude the jungles of Vietnam. This time around he's in hip-deep.

And as the last pillar of his reelection strategy fell—the thoroughly discredited war in Iraq joining the fiction that massive tax cuts to the wealthy would bring on a middle-class boom and that a crackdown on American civil liberties would bring in-

ternational terrorists to their knees—voter support crumbled.

A recent *Newsweek* poll shows that confidence in Bush's ability to responsibly conduct his own war dropped 15 percentage points between March and July. And among those most likely to be called up in a future folly—Americans age 18 to 29—a *Washington Post*-ABC News poll taken after the Democratic National Convention found decorated Navy veteran John Kerry with a 2-to-1 lead.

With numbers so low so close to the election, the president—surely taking more than a "glance at the headlines"—rhetorically retreated from "war president" to man of peace.

But no amount of flip-flop and flim-flam can sever the ties that bind this administration to its corrupt war. A suit filed August 17 in the Ninth U.S. District Court against Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Acting Army Secretary Les Brownlee, among others, ensures that.

An Army reservist from California filed the suit after superiors decided his one-year enlistment would be extended to three. He is one of as many as 40,000 other

soldiers who have been forced to exceed their tours of duty under the "stop-loss" provision enacted after 9/11. This emergency program, discredited by critics as a backdoor draft, allows officials to prolong reservists' tours for the sake of "national security."

With 110,000 U.S. troops stationed in Iraq to fight a war of no purpose and seemingly without end, it's likely the lawsuits won't stop there. That fact certainly inspired Bush's recently announced plan to recall 70,000 regular Army troops from Europe and Asia over the next 10 years to ease the strain on reservists in Iraq.

The most cutting conceit of *Grande Illusion* is the affinity that develops between an aristocratic German officer and his captive French counterpart at the expense of solidarity with the working class fighting their war. In this election season, Bush's preference for his own already has been made clear: Tax cuts to the richest 1 percent amount, on average, to \$48,000; the families of soldiers killed in Iraq get a \$6,000 check.

The Manchurian Candidate now in theaters explores how an amoral dimwit with ambition can ascend to the presidency, though audiences get no sense of whether this one reads. With working-class men and women on the left, and increasingly the right, now gunning for Bush's defeat, director Jonathan Demme ought to consider another well-timed remake—revisiting Renoir through the grand delusion of this plutocrat president's reelection campaign. ■



Where Was The World?

Thank you for your thoughtful series of articles outlining a positive alternative to some of the most important issues facing the country ("8 Ways to Build a Better Body Politic," August 9). I was disappointed, however, to see that foreign policy was absent from the list. In the post 9/11 world, how can a popular party speak to voters without addressing our international safety concerns?

*Dixon Galvez-Searle
Chicago*

Give Us Some Experts

Thank you for your "8 Ways to Build a Better Body Politic." I particularly enjoyed Adam Werbach's article, but partially disagree with his final paragraphs ("Be A Good Steward," August 9).

We need more than just outside instigators to fill the shoes of the industry lobbyists that have capitalized on the current administration's revolving door with public agencies to steal and abuse public resources.

Whom can we trust with our public lands, waters, air and legacy? There are people who have been there, who truly understand their appropriate agency, and who know what they are doing and how to do it.

To take one of Werbach's examples, Jane Goodall lacks the necessary knowledge about supervising national forests. Rather, someone like Gloria Flora, who has performed admirably as a head supervisor of Montana's Lewis and Clark National Forest and Nevada's Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest, would be a far better selection as head of the Forest Service, despite her lesser renown.

We all need to devote a little time and positive energy to decide whom would best fill these key environmental positions. Let us embolden those who had to leave their agencies out of principle to return in key administrative and leadership positions.

*Paul Richards
Boulder, MT*

How To Deal the Death Blow

"Cure A Sick Healthcare System" was a clear and thorough overview of the sad state of the U.S. health system (August 9). Steffie Woolhandler and David Himmelstein correctly noted that a publicly funded system "would be a death blow to the health insurance industry," but far better that insurers get the "death blow" than all those who actually die from insufficient healthcare.

A while back, Woolhandler and Himmelstein published articles that could be the swords to give the *coup de grâce* to this monster. Why these weapons have not been used is puzzling. The articles, published in *The Lancet* and *JAMA*, exposed major health insurance firms as being multi-million-dollar investors in top cigarette manufacturers, the most reviled health-damaging industrialists in the land. This scandal, unfortunately, still sits somewhere in Pandora's box.

This connection, for one thing, explains why insurers insist on condemning "smoking" (by individual victims), instead of manufacturing processes that contaminate typical cigarettes with more dangerous elements than are found in an average toxic-waste dump. If insurers blamed the manufacturers, they'd be doing great harm to their own investment proper-

ties. These may include not just cigarette makers but also big oil (tobacco pesticides), chlorine interests (bleached paper and pesticides), sugar, agricultural conglomerates (many non-tobacco crop items in cigarettes), pharmaceuticals (pesticides and cigarette additives), paper, adhesives and so on.

Such insurers have motive and even corporate duty, to misdiagnose illnesses, "smoking related" or otherwise, caused by their investment properties. They neither warn about industrial toxins and carcinogens nor offer benign alternatives. This is a conflict-of-interest beyond tolerance. Who would entrust their own or their child's healthcare to entities that are owners, via stock shares, of the worst health-damaging industries on the planet?

The conflict-of-interest issue, unaddressed even by Nader, is the one that must be used to discredit the for-profit insurance cartel and pave the way for a public health program.

*John Jonik
Philadelphia*

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DISCUSSION

"We shouldn't continue punishing people for time served. Those with records of any sort should have the opportunity for those records to be wiped clean as it pertains to employers. Like a credit report, crime records should be sealed and not be made available to potential employers after the probationary period ends—or a minimum of a year or two, whichever is shorter."

Join the debate online at "Prison in the Cards."

Debate Rages On

I'd like to respond to Cheryl Robinson's letter disputing the link between thimerosal and autism ("Letters," August 9). Her argument that Annette Fuentes' article, and others like it, make "ill-documented, one-sided ...[and] emotionally charged health claims without scientific rationale," is simply not true. I have read many studies and reports by doctors, nurses and scholars backed up with research notes.

Of course there are studies that show no link between thimerosal and autism, but who has been paying for these studies? Who is interpreting the results? Why are these studies more valid than the ones that show a link? Why have respected researchers been banned from accessing the CDC database when they started finding links in the data? And why was a rider added to the Homeland Security Bill to protect Eli Lilly (the manufacturer of thimerosal) from civil lawsuits? Makes you wonder, doesn't it?

For lots of well-researched studies (and some emotionally-charged stories), check out www.mothering.com, particularly its Nov/Dec 2002 issue.

*Denise Carroll
Occidental, Calif.*

Correction

Michael Atkinson's "When Yes Means No" (August 9) reported that Andy Bichlbaum was responsible for the gay kissing patch in a SimCity game. The patch actually occurred in a SimCopter game, and was the work of Bichlbaum's fellow Yes Man, Jaques Servin.

election 2004 coverage

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Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez swings a baseball bat given to him by Sammy Sosa to hit a “home run” against his opponents.

ANDREW ALVAREZ / AFP / GETTY

Chávez Hits a Home Run

Venezuela’s embattled president calls his own shot by winning the recall election. *By Steve Ellner*

CARACAS—JUST MINUTES AFTER THE OFFICIAL results of Venezuela’s August 15 presidential recall election were announced at 4 a.m., a gathering of Hugo Chávez’s supporters outside the presidential palace chanted “home run.” Days before, President Chávez predicted he would hit a home run that soared over Cuba and landed on the White House.

Speaking to the crowd from the balcony that morning, Chávez directed his words at Washington: “This election did not decide whether a man stays in power. Rather it was a triumph of a political model that is confronting savage neoliberalism.” Chávez, who favors a strong government role in the economy and is an ardent critic of the Bush-promoted Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), is clearly at odds with U.S. policy for Latin America on a wide range of issues.

Indeed, the 58 percent vote for the Venezuelan president is as much a defeat for Bush as it is a victory for

Chávez. The pro-Chávez campaign largely centered on the contributions made to the Venezuelan opposition by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which is financed by the U.S. Congress. A number of the top leaders of organizations that received NED funding signed the proclamation decree of the short-lived government that overthrew Chávez in April 2002. Chávez even accused the NED of bankrolling the National Consensus Plan that opposition leaders presented just weeks before the recall election in reaction to criticism that they lacked common goals. Chávez called the plan “Consensus for Bush.”

During a February 29 rally, Chávez, incited by mounting evidence of NED interference in Venezuela’s elections, accused the organization of direct involvement in the April 2002 coup and announced his government’s initiation of an “anti-imperialist” stage. But Chávez’s anti-imperialism is a far cry from that of

Lenin. Rather than lashing out at foreign capital, Chávez has concentrated his fire on Bush. Chávez is particularly sensitive to remarks from the White House holding him responsible for all decisions, even those made by the national electoral commission and the courts.

Both the opposition and the Bush administration view Chávez's statements as empty rhetoric. One week before the recall election, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roger Noriega defended the NED contributions as a "good investment" and the recipient organizations as "pillars of democracy." He added: "The Venezuelan authorities' criticisms represent nothing more than an attempt to divert attention from the problems facing the nation."

The August 15 results are just the latest in a series of political triumphs since Chávez's presidential election in December 1998. After scoring victories in five electoral contests in 1999-2000, Chávez managed to return to power following the April 2002 coup, and then survived a 10-week "general strike" that was more of a lockout than a work stoppage. In February of this year, his government was unshaken by a week of urban resistance, including violence committed by the opposition (see "Chávez Escapes Recall," April 12, 2004). In May, the government avoided a bloodbath when it discovered a 120-man Colombian paramilitary unit poised on the outskirts of Caracas, which Chávez claimed was brought in by the opposition's radical fringe.

Recent oil price hikes also have been a godsend for Chávez. The extra revenue has financed makeshift education programs that provide the poor with elementary school, high school and college degrees. Polls give the programs a 68 percent approval rating and credit them with boosting Chávez's popularity.

The recall vote also was a slap in the face for the country's biased media. Perhaps never in history has the media so aggressively and consistently attacked an elected government. Just two weeks before the elections, *El Nacional*, formerly the nation's premier newspaper, interviewed ex-President Carlos Andrés Pérez from his Miami home. Pérez suggested that the recall would be ineffective because "it does not accord with the Latin American style." Instead he called for violent struggle to oust the government and said "Chávez must die like a dog."

Chávez not only defeated the opposition at the polls, but on the streets. The opposition may have burnt itself out after calling daily marches at the time of the coup and general strike in 2002. The Sunday before the recall election, the Chavistas participated in an immense, lengthy and festival-like Great Victory March in Caracas and then held large rallies in nearly all states on August 13, the last day of the campaign.

Even in middle-class neighborhoods, formerly the preserve of the opposition, Chávez's followers made inroads, overcoming intimidation similar to what the opposition faces in slum areas. Some of Chávez's middle-class supporters wore pins reading "I'm a Chavista! And so what?"

The opposition's reaction to the official election results, even after they were corroborated by Jimmy Carter and Organization of American States ex-president César Gaviria, was to cry electoral fraud. This attitude indicates that Venezuela's social and political polarization may continue unabated.

But a best-case scenario also is possible. With the recall election out of the way, Chávez's supporters have, for the first time, some breathing room to define their goals beyond a rough sketch. The opposition, which spent the last three years doing nothing but opposing everything Chávez did, also needs to engage in self-criticism and come up with novel formulas, particularly in the area of economic policy. Its National Consensus Plan said nothing opposition leaders were not saying 10 years ago. Indeed, the plan's support for the virtual privatization of social security was attempted months before Chávez's assumption of power.

Venezuela's future also will be defined by what happens in November's U.S. general election. A victory by the Democrats may ease relations between the two nations, in spite of John Kerry's harsh words that Chávez has "sowed instability in the region." In contrast, Chávez has expressed hope that Kerry's election "may open a new stage in relations with Venezuela." With a less hostile government in Washington and a less aggressive opposition at home, Chávez may be put to the test as a leader who claims to represent an alternative for Latin America. ■

STEVE ELLNER is co-editor of *Venezuelan Politics in the Chávez Era: Class, Polarization and Conflict*, recently released in paperback by Lynne Rienner Publishers.

IN SHORT

Beyond the Bullhorn

Protesters at the Republican National Convention have a new resource at their thumbs: a text-messaging system designed expressly for direct action and street-level updates.

TxtMob (www.txtmob.com) enables groups to send and receive cell phone text messages about breaking events. At the Democratic National Convention about 200 users signed up for the service to share news, dispatch medics, and in one case, to send hundreds of witnesses to monitor an activist's arrest. TxtMob is also the perfect tool for organizing spontaneous gatherings or "flashmobs."

The Institute for Applied Autonomy (IAA) (www.appliedautonomy.com) produced TxtMob. Other projects of this art and engineering collective include Little Brother, a propaganda-distributing robot, and Streetwriter, an automated spray painting unit for sidewalk messaging. An IAA operative who styles himself "John Henry" stresses that innovations like TxtMob are a response to the increased threat of violence against activists.

"I've been involved in direct action stuff for quite a few years, and I've never seen it this intense in terms of the militarization of police," he says. "We are in a sort of technical arms race."

Once a person registers a phone number and email address on the TxtMob site, they are free to create public, moderated, or private user groups that others then sign up for. TxtMob users can send messages to their group via a Web interface or their phones. Group moderators can restrict membership or screen messages before sending them out. More than 100 groups have so far registered with TxtMob, ranging from the private and moderated groups, "Legal" and "Medical," to the public, and unmoderated groups like "Pagan Cluster," which caters to "witches at the RNC," and "Booty Text," which promises to let you "get your freak on fast."

John Henry anticipates that police will be monitoring the public groups, especially on August 31, the designated day for nonviolent direct action. The IAA is taking precautions to protect users' privacy.

—Jessica Clark

Deathly Silence

The growing genocide in Darfur testifies to the world's disgrace. *By Eric Reeves*

DARFUR CONTINUES ITS RELENTLESS slide into greater catastrophe, with no adequate humanitarian or diplomatic response on the horizon. More than 100,000 displaced Sudanese have died, and another 2,000-plus die daily. By the year's end, the death toll could stand at more than 400,000. Conditions in the refugee camps in neighboring Chad range from poor to appalling. Many of the displaced persons—perhaps more than 1 million—have no resources whatsoever and are dying agonizing, invisible deaths.

The National Islamic Front regime in Khartoum, which precipitated the genocide in response to the insurgency that began in February 2003, has continued to impede humanitarian relief. They recently ground-

ed U.N. World Food Program planes, even though many children suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition may perish because of a single day's delay in food.

More disturbingly, Khartoum has inaugurated a policy of forcible expulsions from camps for the displaced. The African tribal populations that are the targets of Khartoum's genocide are being forced, typically violently, to return to "their villages." But the villages of these mainly Fur, Massaleit and Zaghawa peoples largely have been destroyed. As numerous aid workers have observed, forced return is a death sentence: There is no food and people returning are easy prey for the marauding Arab militia forces, known as the Janjaweed.

Janjaweed predations continue unchecked and have reached new levels of cruelty. Numerous reports, including from the small contingent of African Union ceasefire monitors, offer accounts of children being hurled serially into the flames of burning huts and buildings. One African Union report includes a picture of the charred remains of eight schoolgirls who were chained together. And as a new Amnesty International report makes clear, rape continues to be used as a weapon of war.

Khartoum's culpability in this disaster is beyond dispute. Any lingering doubts about the responsibility of the regime were incinerated in July by a Human Rights Watch report that revealed internal government documents indicating Khartoum both armed and coordinated the Janjaweed.

Despite these grim reports, the only meaningful action—humanitarian intervention accompanied by necessary military protection—looks unlikely. The reality of genocide has not galvanized U.S. action. A bipartisan congressional resolution unanimously declared the killings in Darfur to be genocide and called on the Bush administration to do so as well. The State Department, however, continues to dither, denying that such a declaration would change anything.

This is not true: Article 1 of the 1948 U.N. Genocide Convention obliges contracting parties (including the United States and all members of the U.N. Secu-



rity Council) to "prevent" genocide. Yet the burdens and consequences of U.S. military intervention in Iraq make U.S. leadership at this critical moment politically unimaginable. An appropriate response from the United Nations is no more promising. An already weak U.N. Security Council Resolution, proposed by the United States, survived only after the removal of a meaningless threat of sanctions against Khartoum. Both veto-wielding China and Pakistan abstained in the Darfur resolution vote, urging that Khartoum be given more time to disarm the Janjaweed. China is motivated in particular by its huge investments in oil development in Sudan.

The Arab League subsequently weighed in with a similar demand, while the Organization of the Islamic Conference fully sided with Khartoum out of religious and anti-Western solidarity. The reality on the ground is that more time simply makes possible greater incorporation of the Janjaweed into Khartoum's regular military and police. The genocidaires will control the camps. All this occurs on the 10th anniversary of the world's shameful failure to respond in Rwanda. Peace talks between Khartoum and the insurgency groups may



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APPALL-O-METER

5.5 A Golden Afternoon

On a fine Sunday afternoon in August, tourists enjoying a scenic boat tour of the Chicago River experienced what you might call unseasonable showers. As the bow of Chicago's "Little Lady" passed under the Kinzie Street bridge, a light drizzle fell from above. By the time the stern had reached the bridge, the sprinkling had become a deluge.

Only then did the unfortunate passengers realize they were being drenched with human refuse. A tour bus driver, it seems, had chosen the bridge as an opportune place to discharge the contents of his vehicle's potty.

Brett McNeil, a rising ace reporter with the *Tribune*, filed a gripping account of the rolling wig-out that seized the vessel: "Another woman, whose white shirt was soaked in what looked like dirty wiper fluid, said nothing. She just stood up and surveyed the boat, her eyes registering what she was now wearing. Reflexively, she began heaving. She looked like she was drowning."

Several passengers were taken to a local hospital for testing. Others took the incident in stride. Having gained dry land, McNeil passed one wretch stripping off his filth-soaked clothes. Said the man, "I feel like I'm in a bad Ben Stiller movie."

2.9 Serving New Masters

Rep. Rodney Alexander of Louisiana blazed a new trail in partisan ethics last week when he fled to the Republican Party 15 minutes before

the election-filing deadline, thus ensuring no Democrat will appear on the ballot against him. Soon thereafter, his wife showed that she too is raring to comport herself in the manner of the party in power.

According to *Roll Call*, when staffer Brian Smoot reported to work to tender his resignation, he found Mrs. Alexander rummaging through his trash.

She quizzed him imperiously about the congressman's dry cleaning, to which Smoot told her desultorily where she could get off. In a display of the faith-based decorum regnant among Washing-

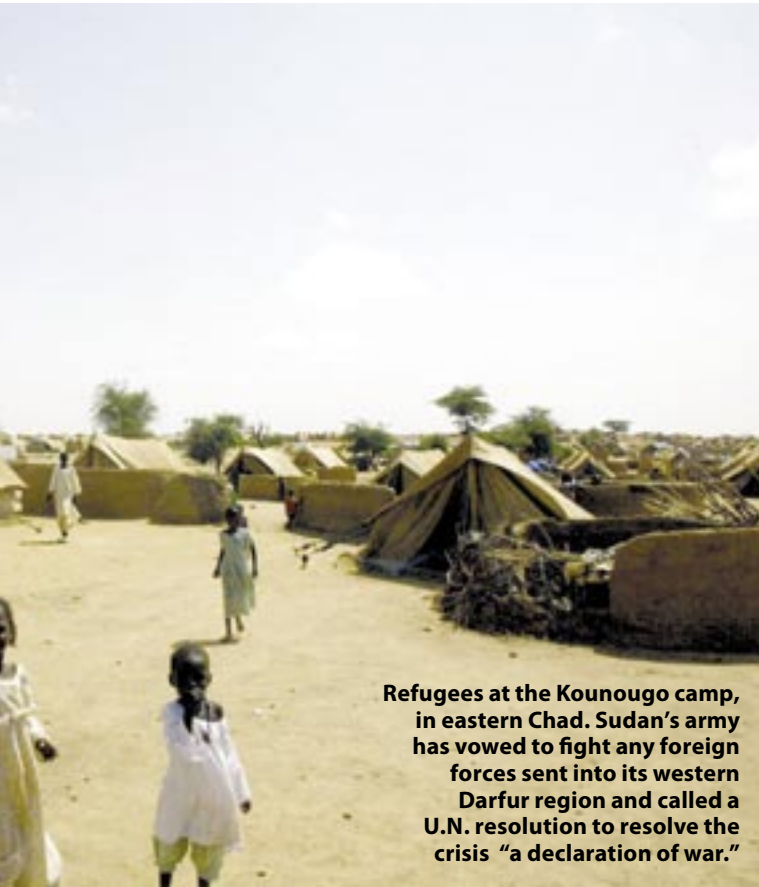
ton's powerful, Mrs. Alexander flew into a rage, driving Smoot and a couple of other resigning staffers from the office, exclaiming, "Good riddance. Praise the Lord!" Then, much as the Nazarene Himself might have done, she flipped off the departing ex-servants.

1.3 Cross of Wheat

The magisterial ways of the Vatican are sometimes a difficult cross for its faithful to bear, as 8-year-old Haley Waldman recently learned when the Diocese of Trenton, N.J., invalidated her First Communion because she received a host not made of wheat. The child suffers from celiac sprue disease, an autoimmune disorder afflicting people with a genetic intolerance of gluten. Eating even small amounts of wheat can damage the lining of the small intestine for celiac sufferers, which leads to all sorts of bad things.

Still, when the Lord had his Last Supper, he didn't bust out with rice cakes. So the church remains firm: no gluten, no dice.

—Dave Mulcahey



Refugees at the Kounougo camp, in eastern Chad. Sudan's army has vowed to fight any foreign forces sent into its western Darfur region and called a U.N. resolution to resolve the crisis "a declaration of war."

begin in late August. Their chances of yielding meaningful results are negligible, given the appeasing words from Kofi Annan's new special representative for Sudan, Jan Pronk, who declared in early August that he found security improving in camps for the displaced and a regime responding in good faith—despite massive evidence to the contrary. This is all the encouragement Khartoum needs to remain intransigent.

Annan apparently is convinced that the Security Council will be embarrassingly divided on Darfur and thus ineffectual in its response. He has consequently settled on a course of expediency and is looking for ways to ensure that the August 30 deadline of the Security Council Resolution doesn't have the force of a true deadline. The resolution "demands" that Khartoum disarm the Janjaweed; but this clear-cut demand has devolved into

a series of vague benchmarks that make any assessment of Khartoum's responsiveness a matter of judgment on the part of Pronk and Annan.

Inspired by this reaction, Khartoum promptly rejected the African Union proposal to put a significant number of peacekeeping forces on the ground in Darfur—one of the only meaningful steps contemplated so far. Obstructing international humanitarian intervention in any form remains Khartoum's highest priority. That it has so thoroughly succeeded in this strategy is a measure of the world's disgrace. ■

ERIC REEVES is a professor at Smith College who has testified several times before Congress on the ongoing crisis in Sudan. His writings on the subject have appeared in *The Nation*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times* and many international publications.



What is the best thing protesters can do?

Be aware of what the climate is, in the city and police department and in the atmosphere that they, as well as the protests, are creating. The most important things are to watch the news, pay attention to everything that is happening on the street and also bring water. We are anticipating peaceful, lawful, safe demonstrations that will be a perfect example of the power of democracy in this country; we are also prepared for the possibility that this will not happen.

What is your favorite protest or public display you've seen recently?

People are being so incredibly creative around the convention that there is not just one thing that I can point to. Personally, I think the Paul Revere ride down Lexington Avenue is pretty creative [7 p.m. on August 24, www.greenedragon.org]. These folks are planning to ride down Lexington Avenue announcing that the Republicans are coming. Also, the map that has been created, The People's Guide to the Republican National Convention, [www.rncguide.com], is a pretty amazing piece of information that has been put out. It's a very detailed map and guide about the different events that are happening.

There has been a lot of talk about how protest is changing. What do you think are some of the most effective forms of protest emerging?

We have seen in the past couple of years in New York City a really impressive and significant effort made towards building coalitions, uniting and working with a variety of organizations toward a common cause. We haven't seen this kind of unified effort in quite a few years—so that's quite impressive to me. Also, people are embracing very creative means of expression, different kinds of street theater and visual art. For me personally, one of the most beautiful things coming out of the convention this year is the explosion in creative art—the T-shirts, the buttons, the stickers. An amazing amount of work is being put into expressing dissent. People are really coming up with new and innovative ways to engage in this kind of dialogue and conversation.

Do you think this political expression will have life past the election?

I can only hope so. Everyone recognizes that the election is only the first hurdle, that there are many things that have been set in place over the past few years that need to be reformed or worked through. On my most optimistic and naïve days, I think that the energy and the unity and the power of dissent that built up over the past few months leading up to the convention will carry through afterwards. On my pessimistic days I worry about the scare tactics and fear-mongering that things like the Patriot Act do. So much is up in the air that it's difficult to say which way we're gonna go. ■

Protest Protector

By Phoebe Connelly

Located three blocks from Madison Square Garden, the New York Civil Liberties Union Protecting Protest Storefront Space is insuring that protesters at the Republican National Convention have the information and legal resources they need. Steve Theberge, a longtime organizer from New York, is coordinating the space.

How did you get the idea for the storefront space and what will be going on there?

The storefront space actually came up at a meeting about six or seven months ago. Folks were thinking about how they were going to work around the Republican National Convention and how we should prepare for what is going to happen. The storefront is our street-level, face-to-face section of what we are doing this summer. We have all of our volunteers based out of the storefront space. We're going to have most of our staff here the week of the convention and we're also doing a variety of different trainings at the space throughout August. It is open 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Monday through Friday, as a space where people can come get information about the demonstrations that are happening and talk to people about what their legal rights are as demonstrators.



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Back Talk *By Susan J. Douglas*

Coming This Fall...

A real-life
reality show:
Who can be
transformed
from self-
absorbed
ignoramus
to the
Policy Swan?

THE TV TALK OF THE SUMMER HAS BEEN HOW the Fox Network brazenly copied ABC's upcoming reality show "Wife Swap" (in which wives change families for a few weeks), named the show "Trading Spouses," and rushed it onto the air this summer, scooping ABC and landing a hit. While ABC licks its programming wounds, it should note that there are still plenty of as-yet-undeveloped reality TV premises that it could scoop Fox on to get even. For example:

THE BOSS *Contestants:* Indicted or, preferably, convicted CEOs, CFOs and other corporate crooks who stole millions from stockholders, retirees and employees.

Premise: Each boss competes for the loyalty and approval of a pre-selected, composite workforce. The workforce votes each week, giving the most points to the boss who shows the most integrity, leadership, and sensitivity to workers' needs and concerns. Thus, each week, a boss is fired. At first Kenneth Lay tries to win them over with stock options, and all the workers laugh in his face and yell, "You're fired." Pretty soon the competition gets ugly, as the CEOs find themselves offering flex time, on-site daycare centers, healthcare benefits comparable to those enjoyed by the U.S. Senate, and, in the winning gambit, paid maternity and paternity leave.

THE REAL FEAR FACTOR *Contestants:* Republican members of the House and Senate (preference given to those with the most macho rhetoric).

Premise: Contestants are fitted with an electronic "fear-o-meter" and then dispatched to places that have especially benefited from their policies. To add to the excitement, contestants must wear big signs on their backs that say "Bush/Cheney 2004." Destinations include Sudan, Najaf, Gaza, South Central Los Angeles, Detroit, Ciudad Juárez, rural Nebraska, Paris and Amherst, Massachusetts.

EVANGELICAL REAL WORLD *Contestants:* High-level Moral Majority-Christian Coalition types and religious right leaders.

Premise: Contestants are thrown together in the Playboy Mansion to see how they hold up in such a den of iniquity. The twist? Contestants don't know about the *hidden* cameras, especially the ones in the hot tub, stables and chapel. In what the contestants will later charge was highly unfair editing, pronouncements about the sins of gay marriage and the benefits of "abstinence only" sex-ed programs are spliced together with the hidden-camera footage of teenage male lovers ducking out the back door and the lap dancing parties in the chapel. Even Fox feels it can't air

the footage from the stables.

THE POLICY SWAN *Contestants:* All of the recent contestants from MTV's "The Real World," "Fraternity Life" and "Room Raiders."

Premise: Who can be transformed from self-absorbed ignoramus to the Policy Swan? Contestants who previously were totally preoccupied with how much beer they could drink in four minutes, or who was really hot, are forced to read newspapers and nonfiction books about politics and the economy, work in homeless shelters and intern with Maxine Waters, Henry Waxman, Charlie Rangel or Carl Levin. In the grand finale, they are grilled by Victor Navasky, Paul Krugman and Barbara Ehrenreich, and the winner actually gets a million bucks for being knowledgeable and smart.

FEMALE EYE FOR ANY GUY *Contestants:* Any man who thinks feminism is unnecessary, outdated or irrelevant.

Premise: Using some of the surgical and makeup techniques pioneered in *Extreme Makeover* and *The Swan*, men are temporarily turned into women, complete with breasts and a uterus. Their challenges include: walking past a construction site, working for Wal-Mart and asking about their promotion plan, nursing a baby while holding down a job, trying to find decent, affordable daycare, living with an abusive and unemployed husband and moving to a homeless shelter with two kids because their welfare benefits have run out. The man who meets these challenges while smiling all the time, getting into Size 4 pants and insisting "I'm not a feminist, but..." wins.

HIGH SCHOOL ROULETTE *Contestants:* High school students from swanky private schools and from inner city, predominantly black or Latino schools.

Premise: Sophomores from the private schools and inner-city schools trade places for three years and the cameras follow them around, comparing facilities, classes, quality of books, athletic, art and music programs. The ones who get into college win.

GOTCHA! *Contestants:* Anyone who has ever been to an anti-war, anti-WTO, anti-sweat shop, anti-Bush demonstration or rally, is on the MoveOn.org list serve, or has expressed the opinion that Bush is an incompetent, unprincipled liar and fraud.

Premise: Cameras accompany FBI agents as they knock on the doors of surprised college students or Grey Panthers and tell them they are under surveillance, could be arrested at any time, and better not show up in New York during the Republican convention or say anything, ever again, about, well, anything. ■

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Mass Media.*



Keyes' Ideological Quest

ALAN KEYES, THE CONSERVATIVES' BLACK attack dog, has been dispatched to Illinois to sully the image of Barack Obama, the state's Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate. Illinois Republicans failed to find an indigenous candidate capable of sinking Obama's rising star so they drafted Keyes, a 54-year-old Maryland resident and well-known talk-show host who has unsuccessfully run for president and U.S. Senate twice each.

The state has lacked a Republican candidate since embarrassing divorce records forced primary winner Jack Ryan to drop out. Peter Fitzgerald, the Republican who currently holds the seat, is retiring after one term.

Tellingly, the same GOP leaders who selected Keyes never before managed to slate a black candidate to run for a major office in Illinois. Their choice of outsider Keyes was not just a cynical racial ploy: It was a slap in the face of the state's Republican electorate. It stinks of rank political opportunism and deep hypocrisy, starting with this: Keyes, hired as a black hit man, opposes affirmative action.

And the hypocrisy doesn't stop there. The Maryland resident derided the decision of Hilary Rodham Clinton to change residences to run for the Senate. Keyes told Fox News on March 17, 2000, that he deeply resented "the destruction of federalism represented by Hillary Clinton's willingness to go into a state she doesn't even live in and pretend to represent people there." But Keyes' lesser-known hypocrisy concerns his professed affection for the equal rights guaranteed in the Declaration of Independence.

He recently chided Obama's pro-choice votes as upholding the "slaveholder's positions" for denying unborn children equal rights. Cynics would be justified in questioning Keyes' affection for equal rights considering his longtime support for the apartheid regime of South Africa, which notoriously denied black South Africans their equal rights.

Keyes served in the Reagan administration as ambassador to the U.N. Economic and Social Council under Jeanne Kirkpatrick and as assistant secretary of state for International Organizations Affairs. The articulate black Reaganite was in great demand as an apologist for the apartheid regime and the administration's "constructive engagement" policy with it.

He was among the many extreme right-wing elements of the Reagan administration that were absolutely opposed to the leadership of Nelson Mandela, one of the

20th Century's most revered symbols of freedom.

After he left government service, Keyes became an important lobbyist for the apartheid South African regime, often speaking out against the African National Congress and its international supporters. Keyes was a member of the World Freedom Foundation, a right-wing religious group that actively supported the apartheid government as a bulwark against communism.

He also was listed as an adviser to the International Freedom Foundation (IFF), a U.S. group exposed as a propaganda arm for South African counterinsurgency operations in a famous July 16, 1995, *Newsday* investigative report. The IFF, which listed several influential conservative figures, was found by *Newsday* to be "controlled and funded by the South African regime."

Keyes also worked for the public relations firm of Black, Manafort, Stone and Kelly to help facilitate the U.S. appearance of Angola rebel leader Jonas Savimbi, who became the darling of the extreme right in the United States because of his opposition to Angola's left-leaning government. Until he

was killed in February 2002, Savimbi was leader of the Angolan rebel group UNITA, responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians and the laying of millions of land mines. Human Rights Watch reports that UNITA's indiscriminate use of landmines resulted in more than 15,000 amputees in Angola in 1988, ranking it alongside Afghanistan and Cambodia.

Keyes supported Savimbi, a man now said to be one of the most bloodthirsty rebel leaders of the 20th Century, and he opposed Mandela. But he has not been chastened by this ghastly historical error. He has gained the admiration (and funding) of Savimbi's and apartheid's supporters, many of whom were the same people. In an ironic way, Keyes' racial identity gives him considerable room on the ideological fringe and he has cultivated an extensive network of right-wing supporters, some from groups verging on racist ideology. It seems that all right-wingers are happy to have an articulate black apologist available.

But Keyes' utility as an ideological warrior demeans the voters of Illinois, who seek a senator to represent the state's interest. Keyes' crusade also casts aspersions on Obama's candidacy by suggesting the Illinois senator is merely mounting a racial effort. Perhaps the best that can be said of Keyes' candidacy is that it assures Illinois will elect a black senator—although that would have happened even without his own destruction of federalism. ■

The choice of outsider Keyes stinks of rank political opportunism and deep hypocrisy, starting with this: Keyes, hired as a black hit man, opposes affirmative action.



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The First Stone *By Joel Bleifuss*

Friends and Enemies

'Hitler and his supporters were Satanists and homosexuals. That's a true statement.'

THIS NOVEMBER'S ELECTION would be no contest if American voters knew the extent to which the Bush administration has been acting in league with Corporate America against the public interest.

In 1995, right-wing strategist Grover Norquist (see Garrison Keillor's "We're Not in Lake Wobegon Anymore," back cover) and House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas) established the K Street Project, a database that can best be described as the Republican Party's friends—and enemies—list. This master list contains the names of K Street lobbyists, where they are employed, what their party affiliation is, what political work they have done, as well as how much they have contributed to which candidate.

In the Senate, Rick Santorum (R-Penn.), a key player of the K Street Project, has helped maintain the list's integrity by convening private Tuesday meetings of Republican lobbyists and, sometimes, Senate and White House staffers. Last year, Nicholas Confessore reported in the *Washington Monthly*:

The chief purpose of these gatherings is to discuss jobs—specifically, the top one or two positions at the biggest and most important industry trade associations and corporate offices. Every week, the lobbyists present pass around a list of the jobs available and discuss whom to support. Santorum's responsibility is to make sure each one is filled by a loyal Republican—a senator's chief of staff, for instance, or a top White House aide, or another lobbyist whose reliability has been demonstrated.

Where each individual lobbyist stands on the K Street Project list is



**House Majority Leader
Tom DeLay (R-Texas):
D.C.'s Dirty Harry**

then used by Republican leadership to determine who is trustworthy enough to be granted access to the White House, Congress and federal agencies.

Rep. Thomas Davis (R-Va.), the chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee, told the *Washington Post* that contributing to the Democratic Party can "buy you enemies." Marshall Wittmann, a staffer for Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), has explained that DeLay, as keeper of this list, has become "the Dirty Harry of Capitol Hill, the bad cop. Every K Street lobbyist is shaking in their boots because K Street lives on access, and DeLay can shut off their oxygen."

But when that oxygen gets turned on, national priorities are set, regulations promulgated, legislation enacted and troublemakers dealt with.

Most recently, the Interior De-

partment "reassigned" Gary Frazer, the department's senior career official in the Endangered Species Office, to a new post as a liaison to the United States Geological Survey. Frazer had angered the Interior Department by paying more attention to the needs of wildlife than the corporate "partners" of his politically-appointed superiors.

"It was the inevitable thing that happens to someone with conservation leanings who works in the Department of the Interior," says John Kostyack, senior counsel at the National Wildlife Federation. "Frazer expressed concerns about the harmful policies that the Bush administration was pushing through one too many times and he was forced into exile."

Frazer recently disagreed with the Bush administration's decision to rewrite the rules protecting wildlife—and humans—from

STAN HONDA / GETTY

pesticides. Previously when the Environmental Protection Agency considered approving a pesticide for use, it had to consult with the experts at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Not anymore. Says Kostyack, "This administration has rammed through new rules that take Fish and Wildlife out of the discussion and essentially fast track the approval of pesticides without us knowing the kind of harm they will cause endangered species and ecosystems." According to Kostyack, documents show that lobbyists from the chemical industry and agribusiness "were on the ground floor drafting these new rules."

Frazer also tangled with his Fish and Wildlife bosses over their attempts to remove the California delta smelt from the list of animals protected by the Endangered Species Act in order to accommodate California agribusinesses' desire to pump water from the state's waterways.

Julie MacDonald, an aide to the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish, Wildlife and Parks, overrode Fish and Wildlife scientists who maintained that the smelt should remain protected. In an April e-mail to three of the scientists she wrote: "I believe it is critical to present a fair characterization of our understanding of the smelt to date to the public and to our partners. ... I believe that the facts represented by the Service provide an oversimplified and misleading characterization of what is happening."

By "partners," MacDonald was referring to the Farm Bureau. As soon as she had her done duty and sent that e-mail, she reported back to the Farm Bureau's chief counsel, Brenda Jahns Southwick, and read her e-mail to her. Southwick then phoned Joe Findaro, a Farm Bureau lobbyist in Washington, and asked him to go to MacDonald's office and pick up a copy of the e-mail, which he did.

These are just a couple examples of how the Bush administration has sold out the public interest to its corporate backers. This corporatization of public policy could not succeed if the media did its job. The right, however, has managed

to exert huge control over public debate.

John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton in their new book *Banana Republicans* write:

Conservatives have created their own, unabashedly conservative media, while simultaneously working to advance the careers and visibility of conservative journalists within the mainstream. This dual strategy gives them the ability to constantly push forward ideas that are on the conservative margins, promoting radically conservative ideas while simultaneously appealing to the center. ... Liberal activists could adopt this dual strategy, but they haven't. Instead, the Democratic Party's centrist faction has tried to exclude or marginalize factions that are seen as 'too far to the left.' ... Moreover, the pattern of conservative pushing from the right versus Democrats moving toward the center has had the effect over time of steadily redefining the center further and further to the right.

Project K Street's Norquist, who describes his coalition as "center-right" knows what he is doing, and where he wants to lead America. For him George W. Bush is merely a tool. He's put it this way:

It's like this. Some of us in the movement want to get to St. Louis, and some of us to Utah, and some to Los Angeles, and some of us want to go all the way to Japan. Bush wants to get to St. Louis. Is there any reason to argue with him about the need to get to L.A.? Or to get really flaky and say we need to go all the way to Japan? Of course not.

It takes a village idiot

Alan Keyes has lived up the U.S. Senate race in Illinois. What will he say next? Whatever, it's bound to be a doozy. Take these past Keyes statements:

On all the matters that touch upon the critical moral issues, Arnold Schwarzenegger is on the evil side. This is a fact.

And:

Hitler and his supporters were Satanists and homosexuals. That's just a true statement.

How to start your day

1. Create a "new folder" on your computer.
2. Name it "George W. Bush."
3. Send it to the trash.
4. Empty the trash.
5. Your computer will ask you: "Do you really want to get rid of 'George W. Bush'?"
6. Calmly move the cursor onto "Yes," and click.

Anybody but Bush?

At www.AnybodyButBush.org, Americans who have sworn to vote for "anybody but Bush" get a chance to do just that. What's more, they can nominate candidates to go head-to-head against him. Current top vote-getter: *Streptococcus Pneumoniae*, 1245 votes, George W. Bush, 239.

Almost a vegetable

Here is something that goes well with Freedom Fries—unlike Heinz Ketchup, a portion of proceeds for this condiment goes to Iraq war orphans (www.wketchup.com).



PARTY HACKS

Election chiefs trim voter rolls to benefit GOP

BY HANS JOHNSON



IT'S THE KIND OF PREACHING SO COMMON IN conservative circles that it slips past the public. In May, a Minnesota state official told a prayer group in May, the "five words" that are "probably most destructive" in the nation today are "separation of church and state."

Such an assertion by a public servant would have drawn shrugs were it not from Secretary of State Mary Kiffmeyer, whose duty is impartial administration of elections. And her remarks might have escaped wider attention had she not later justified them, claiming victim status for right-wing Christians: "There are a lot of good church people who don't think they can be involved in government."

Kiffmeyer's defense of greater church involvement in the democratic process appears curious in light of rules she proposed that would have had precisely the opposite effect on most Minnesotans. Kiffmeyer recently decided that in order to vote in November every would-be voter in the state must show an ID reflecting an "exact match" to the file of names, driver's license numbers and dates of birth circulated by her office. Such rules would have the effect of robbing the vote from thousands of state residents, including those who encounter errors in the information about them on Kiffmeyer's official list.

Minnesotans are not alone in facing gaps in electoral integrity from schemes like those concocted in 2000 by Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris. A nationwide review reveals a disturbing pattern in closely contested states of Republican office-holders with close ties to the Bush-Cheney campaign: Remove eligible voters from official rolls and erect barriers to new or young voters and minorities who vote overwhelmingly Democratic.

An administrative law judge nixed Kiffmeyer's required ID matching in a ruling on July 22 but did not dismantle a second barrier she erected. Many county officials say her cumbersome voter-registration form deters would-be applicants. In St. Paul's Ramsey County alone, more than a third of 6,500 completed forms submitted earlier this year contained errors and were rejected.

Instead of allowing a clearer, easier form after learning of such problems, Kiffmeyer, cribbing a line from the Bush reelection playbook, demanded continuity amid a crisis she helped create. "We are in midstream in an election cycle," she told the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. "We have an application out there ... and we'll continue to use that."

In placing hurdles before voters, conservatives are nothing if not consistent.

Missouri has been a hotbed of election intrigue since November 2000 when a high turnout of African-American voters embarrassed then-Sen. John Ashcroft, who narrowly lost to the deceased Mel Carnahan. Since then, Sen. Kit Bond (R-Mo.) has pushed for and won provisions in the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) that stiffened ID requirements involving new registrants and voters across the

nation. Matt Blunt, the GOP secretary of state, also faced pressure from his right-wing base to tighten ballot access.

Missouri conservatives hoped their strategy of policing access to the ballot would bear fruit in the August 3 primary, the state's first major election since implementing HAVA. Instead, it was Bond who felt the perils of aggressive purging of state voter lists. His name was struck from records in his hometown of Mexico, where he has voted for 40 years, and he had to produce a photo ID and voter identification card in order to vote for himself.

Bond's experience may be Exhibit A in a larger case. Litigation seems likely after dozens of St. Louis residents had to seek assistance from NAACP volunteers to get a ballot from election monitors who didn't find them on rosters. One woman, who had recently changed apartments within the same building, faced rejection at her polling place even though she was registered at the address.

In New Hampshire, Republicans have made a pas-

'It is simply not right to allow college students to have any say in our elections in New Hampshire,' Republican House Speaker Gene Chandler said. 'We need to control that.'

time of resisting young voters in college towns. Students in the university town of Durham turned out to vote in 2002, only to receive a handout from election proctors laced with scare tactics, including the warning that they could jeopardize their financial aid by voting at an address other than their permanent home.

The strategy successfully diminished turnout, and Democrats felt the sting. The GOP took full control of state government, rolling from parity in the state senate to a rollicking 18-to-6 majority. In the next session on strict party-line votes, they promptly pushed through a sweeping bill to limit access to voting and toughen sanctions for fraud.

This spring, the state's Republican House Speaker Gene Chandler put a razor-fine point on the motives behind the law. "It is simply not right to allow college students to have any say in our elections in New Hampshire," he told a public forum. "We need to control that."

Other episodes show that Harris' Florida exploits were only the beginning.

► In Michigan, Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land doubles as the state chair of the Bush-Cheney campaign. In this capacity, she gives fundraising pitches for Bush and shows her penchant for strategic arithmetic. "If we all signed up 17 new voters and worked 17 hours for our president," she told a gathering in Holland, "Bush will win Michigan."

Continued on page 28

HANS JOHNSON
*writes on labor,
religion and
politics for In
These Times*



SUM OF A GLITCH

IN THE ALABAMA 2002 GENERAL election, machines made by Election Systems and Software (ES&S) flipped the governor's race. Six thousand three hundred Baldwin County electronic votes mysteriously disappeared after the polls had closed and everyone had gone home. Democrat Don Siegelman's victory was handed to Republican Bob Riley, and the recount Siegelman requested was denied. Three months after the election, the vendor shrugged. "Something happened. I don't have enough intelligence to say exactly what," said Mark Kelley of ES&S.

When I began researching this story in October 2002, the media was reporting that electronic voting machines are fun and

speedy, but I looked in vain for articles reporting that they are accurate. I discovered four magic words, "voting machines and glitch," which, when entered into a search engine, yielded a shocking result: A staggering pile of miscounts was accumulating. These were reported locally but had never been compiled in a single place, so reporters were missing a disturbing pattern.

I published a compendium of 56 documented cases in which voting machines got it wrong.

How do voting-machine makers respond to these reports? With shrugs. They indicate that their miscounts are nothing to be concerned about. One of their favorite phrases is: "It didn't change the result."

Except, of course, when it did:

- In the 2002 general election, a computer miscount overturned the House District 11 result in Wayne County, North Carolina. Incorrect programming caused machines to skip several thousand party-line votes, both Republican and Democratic. Fixing the error turned up 5,500 more votes and reversed the election for state representative.
- This crushing defeat never happened: Voting machines failed to tally "yes" votes on the 2002 school bond issue in Gretna, Nebraska. This error gave the false impression that the measure had failed miserably, but it actually passed by a 2-to-1 margin. Responsibility for the errors was attributed to ES&S, the Omaha company that had provided the ballots and the machines.



Evidence shows that machines might be the real swing voters this November **By Bev Harris**

- According to the *Chicago Tribune*, "It was like being queen for a day—but only for 12 hours," said Richard Miholic, a losing Republican candidate for alderman in 2003 who was told that he had won a Lake County, Illinois, primary election. He was among 15 people in four races affected by an ES&S vote-counting foul-up.
- An Orange County, California, election computer made a 100 percent error during the April 1998 school bond referendum. The Registrar of Voters Office initially announced that the bond issue had lost by a wide margin; in fact, it was supported by a majority of the ballots cast. The error was attributed to a programmer's reversing the "yes" and "no" answers in the software used to count the votes.

- A computer program that was specially enhanced to speed the November 1993 Kane County, Illinois, election results to a waiting public did just that—unfortunately, it sped the wrong data. Voting totals for a dozen Illinois races were incomplete, and in one case they suggested that a local referendum proposal had lost when it actually had been approved. For some reason, software that had worked earlier without a hitch had waited until election night to omit eight precincts in the tally.
- A squeaker—no, a landslide—oops, we reversed the totals—and about those absentee votes, make that 72-19, not 44-47. Software programming errors, sorry. Oh, and reverse that election, we announced the wrong winner. In the 2002 Clay County, Kansas, commissioner primary, voting machines said Jerry Mayo ran a close race but lost, garnering 48 percent of the vote, but a hand recount revealed Mayo had won by a landslide, receiving 76 percent of the vote.

The excuses given for these miscounts are just as flawed as the election results themselves. Vendors have learned that reporters and election workers will believe pretty much anything, as long as it sounds high-tech. They blame incorrect vote counts on "a bad chip" or "a faulty memory card," but defective chips and bad memory cards have very different symptoms. They don't function at all, or they spit out nonsensical data.

In the November 2002 general election in Scurry County, Texas, poll workers got suspicious about a landslide victory for two Republican commissioner candidates. Told that a "bad chip" was to blame, they had a new computer chip flown in and also counted the votes by hand—and found that Democrats actually had won by wide margins, overturning the election.

Voting machine vendors claim these things are amazingly accurate. Bob Urosevich, who has headed three voting machine companies under five corporate names, said in 1990 that his company's optical-scan machines had an error rate of only "one-thousandth of 1 percent."

At that time Urosevich was with ES&S (then called American Information Systems). Recently, the same Urosevich (now president of Diebold Election Systems) gave an even more glowing endorsement of his company's touch-screen accuracy.

"Considering the magnitude of these elections, which includes more than 870,000 registered voters within the four

Maryland counties, we are very pleased with the results as every single vote was accurately counted," he said.

In 1992, when Chuck Hagel accepted his position as chairman of American Information Systems, he offered a rousing endorsement: "The AIS system is 99.99 percent accurate," he assured.

But do these claims hold up?

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, in the 2000 general election an optical-scan machine in Allamakee County, Iowa, was fed 300 ballots and reported 4 million votes. The county auditor tried the machine again but got the same result. Eventually, the machine's manufacturer, ES&S, agreed to have replacement equipment sent. Republicans had hoped that the tiny but heavily Republican county would tip the scales in George W. Bush's favor, but tipping it by almost 4 million votes attracted national attention.

November, 2003: Officials from Boone County, Indiana, wanted to know why their MicroVote machines counted 144,000 votes cast when only 5,352 existed.

Better than a pregnant chad—these machines can actually give birth.

In the 1996 McLennan County, Texas, Republican primary runoff, one precinct tallied about 800 votes, although only 500 ballots had been ordered.

"We don't think it's serious enough to throw out the election," said county Republican Party Chairman M.A. Taylor. Error size: 60 percent.

Here's a scorching little 66 percent error rate: Eight hundred and twenty-six votes in one Tucson, Arizona-area precinct simply evaporated, remaining unaccounted for a month after the 1994 general election. No recount appears to have been done, even though two-thirds of voters did not get their votes counted. Election officials said the vanishing votes were the result of a faulty computer program. Apparently, the software programming error and the person who caused it are still at large.

Some voters aren't so sure that every single vote was accurately counted during the 2002 general election in Maryland.

According to the *Washington Times*, Kevin West of Upper Marlboro, who voted at the St. Thomas Church in Croom, said, "I pushed a Republican ticket for governor and his name disappeared. Then the Democrat's name got an 'X' put in it."

No one will ever know whether the Maryland machines counted correctly because the new Diebold touch-screen system is unauditable.

Tom Eschberger became a vice president of ES&S not long after he accepted an immunity deal for cooperating with prosecutors in a case against Arkansas Secretary of State Bill McCuen, who pleaded guilty to taking kickbacks and bribes in a scheme related to computerized voting systems.

Eschberger reported that a test conducted on a malfunctioning machine and its software in the 1998 general election in Hono-

lulu, Hawaii, showed the machine worked normally. He said the company did not know that the machine wasn't functioning properly until the Supreme Court ordered a recount, when a second test on the same machine detected that it wasn't counting properly.

"But again, in all fairness, there were 7,000 machines in Venezuela and 500 machines in Dallas that did not have problems," he said. Really?

DALLAS, TEXAS A software programming error caused Dallas County, Texas' new, \$3.8 million high-tech ballot system to miss 41,015 votes during the November 1998 election. The system refused to count votes from 98 precincts, telling itself they had already been counted. Operators and election officials didn't realize they had a problem until after they'd released "final" totals that omitted one in eight votes.

Hindering America's Vote

By Steven Hill

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), the electoral reform bill passed by Congress in 2002, is a mixed blessing. In fact, HAVA never addressed the most glaring problem of American election administration—the decentralized election bureaucracy of more than 3,000 counties that run elections with few national standards, no uniformity and little oversight.

HAVA does include some positive gains, but those have suffered from foot dragging and stalled implementation. Here is a scorecard of HAVA implementation:

1) **Electoral Assistance Commission:** HAVA took a timid step of establishing the most crucial component of good election administration, and what most democracies already have—a national elections commission. The Electoral Assistance Commission (EAC) was given limited powers to "assist" states and issue voluntary guidelines. The Democratic Party appointed its commissioners right away, but Republicans didn't appoint theirs until January 2004. Four months before the November election, the EAC barely functions with seven full-time staff members and a recently appointed 15-member technical standards committee.

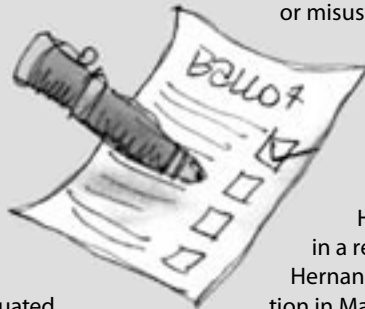
2) **Funding for new equipment and training:** Congress allocated \$4 billion to replace antiquated punch-card voting equipment and to train poll workers. The catch was that the money couldn't be allocated until the EAC commissioners had been appointed. Hence, by stalling the appointment of their commissioners, the Republicans also stalled the allocation of the money (surprise, surprise). On June 17, the EAC finally sent \$861 million to 25 states, but the allocation comes too close to the November election. And training of poll workers remains inadequate.

3) **Provisional ballots:** States now must allow voters to cast what is known as a "provisional ballot" if they are not on the voter list in their precinct, and election officials must validate or deny each provisional ballot after the election before certifying winners. If used in Florida, voters banned by the notorious felon blacklist could have cast a provisional ballot. But implementation of the provisional ballot has been plagued by the familiar pattern—lack of follow-through, lack of funding, and most importantly, lack of national standards, producing little uniformity from state to state. Some states allow provisionals to be counted if they are filed in the wrong precinct, but at least 16 states throw them out. And few states have worked out details on how to train poll

workers to implement provisional balloting, setting up the potential for a ballot-by-ballot fight in any close election.

4) **Statewide computerized voter lists:** Despite the critics, statewide voter databases are an important gain that make universal voter registration possible as is practiced in many European democracies where 18-year-olds automatically are registered to vote. Were this to happen in the United States, 50 million voters would be instantly added to the rolls, many of them young people and minorities. Yet no state has made any progress with this HAVA mandate.

5) **Having first-time voters who register by mail provide identification at the polls:** Requiring these voters to show proof of identity such as a driver's license or electric bill was the most dreaded part of HAVA. While it's supposed to apply only to first-time voters, that distinction already has been confused or misused by poll workers during primary elections this year, causing eligible voters to be turned away. Given how poorly trained poll workers generally are, imagine the confusion this November as some voters are required to provide IDs and others are not.



Here's one small example of how HAVA played out in a recent election. In East Chicago, Indiana, Helen Hernandez was mistakenly asked to produce identification in May's primary, even though she has lived there since the '50s and has voted in just about every election. Hernandez complained, but the poll worker rejected her protests and did not offer her a provisional ballot, which HAVA requires when there is a dispute. Hernandez was on a lunch break from her janitor's job and did not have time to retrieve her identification.

Some of HAVA's provisions could be major steps forward in bringing U.S. election administration into the 21st Century, setting a course that eventually might put us on par with Brazil and India (both have national election commissions that establish national standards and have been able to successfully implement touch-screen-computerized voting without the conflict and controversy it has produced in the United States). But sluggish implementation has made the gains of HAVA largely ineffective. As a result, we are heading into another presidential election with a Third World election administration infrastructure. Can you say Florida Redux? ■

STEVEN HILL is senior analyst for the Center for Voting and Democracy (www.fairvote.org) and author of "Fixing Elections: The Failure of America's Winner Take All Politics" (www.FixingElections.com).

In one of the nonsensical answers that we hear so often from vendors, ES&S assured us that votes were never lost, just uncounted.

The company took responsibility and was trying to find two apparently unrelated software bugs, one that mistakenly indicated precinct votes were in when they weren't, and another that forgot to include 8,400 mail-in ballots in the final tally. Democrats were livid and suspicious, but Tom Eschberger said, "What we had was a speed bump along the way."

CARACAS, VENEZUELA In May 2000, Venezuela's highest court suspended elections because of problems with the tabulation for the national election. Venezuela sent an air force jet to Omaha to fetch experts from ES&S in a last-ditch effort to fix the problem. Dozens of protesters chanted, "Gringos get out!" at ES&S technicians. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez accused ES&S of trying to destabilize the country's electoral process. Chávez asked for help from the U.S. government because, he said, the United States had recommended ES&S.

Some people, when you give them the short but horrifying version of the elec-

tronic voting issue, insist on minimizing the problem. You tell them about an election that lost 25 percent of its votes, and they say, "That's just an isolated incident." When you add that another election had a 100 percent error, they call it a "glitch." When you tell them a voting machine was videotaped recording votes for the opposite candidate than the one selected, they say, "There are problems in every election."

No. We are not talking about a few minor glitches. These are real miscounts by voting machines, which took place in real elections. Almost all of them were caused by incorrect programming, whether by accident or by design.

Is this not alarming? These voting systems have miscounted our votes, flipping elections even when they are not particularly close. Even more alarming: We have no idea how many miscounts go unnoticed.

To correct current procedural flaws, we need to bring in the right kinds of experts—auditors—and we need to keep the system simple.

Here are some procedural safeguards we should consider:

- Verify the machine tally while still at the polling place. Run a report of the tally from the polling place before phoning, modeming or driving anything to the county. Post this report on the door of the precincts and make copies available to the press.
- Compare the polling-place tally with the matching totals assigned by the central county office. If there is a discrepancy, pull out the paper ballots and do an audit.
- Provide clearly delineated accounting for the votes that appear separately from the precinct totals, like absentee votes and provisional votes. Polling-place tallies should always match what is posted at the polling place. Separate the other votes cleanly and record them in a way that is easily understandable for everyone.
- Hand audits must be a routine part of every election, not just used for recounts. Hand-audit any anomalies.
- Make "random" spot checks truly random by using a transparent and public method for random selection.

Continued on page 29

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Audacious and Hopeful

On the trail of Obama's rising star

By David Moberg • Danville, Illinois

Back on the campaign trail after dazzling a national audience at the Democratic National

Convention, U.S. Senate candidate Barack Obama was greeted like a rock star in the small towns of downstate Illinois. Hours before his arrival, the banquet hall of the Turtle Run golf club in this hard-pressed town of

nearly 40,000 was filled with 650 people, the biggest political rally in several decades according to local pols. The crowd bode well for his campaign but had national implications as well: Obama demonstrates how a progressive politician can redefine mainstream political symbols to expand support for liberal policies and politicians rather than engage in creeping capitulation to the right.

Danville—like the audience—is overwhelmingly white, but the plurality of its primary vote went to Obama, the son of a Kenyan student and a white woman from Kansas who met in Hawaii. He eventually settled

IN THESE TIMES

in Chicago, where he worked as a community organizer and lawyer before becoming a highly regarded state senator who pushed through such policies as expanded health insurance, death-penalty reform and working-poor tax credits—"the go-to guy for anything progressive, whatever the cause," according to one union lobbyist. His victory in the March primary—winning 53 percent of the vote overall against six substantial candidates, including many city, suburban and downstate areas with few black voters—seemed to open a new era in racial politics.

By virtue of being the only African-American in the Senate, Obama will become a national political leader—if he wins, as seems almost certain. After the primary, he had a substantial lead over his Republican opponent, who was later forced to withdraw in a sex scandal. Then after weeks of desperate floundering in search of a candidate, Republicans picked Maryland resident Alan Keyes, the black ultraconservative talk-show host and perennial failed candidate who launched his campaign with attacks on gay marriage and abortion and a pledge to win "for God." His candidacy will intensify the war between hard-right and moderately conservative Republicans, who have managed until recently to do well in Illinois despite an electorate increasingly Democratic.

This gives Obama a wide-open shot at winning over independents and moderate Republicans. But he has only modestly tempered his progressive record—including early opposition to the war in Iraq—in a bid for the center. Instead, he has crafted a political message that articulates progressive goals in ways that connect with a wider audience. It is a muted, oblique populism, wrapped in red, white and blue bunting.

Much of his political success is personal: his exotic biography (a "Cinderella story," one person in Danville said), education (first black *Harvard Law Review* editor), political record and charm all contribute. He's also a poised, self-effacing, believable and eloquent speaker who can connect intimately with his audience.

But Obama also succeeds because he places his progressive goals within a context that expands support, not just rallies true believers. His unlikely candidacy, he told the Danville audience, is rooted in his belief that "there's a fundamental decency to the American people that can't be denied. If I could tap into that, my election couldn't be denied." But he also taps into the deep-seated American belief, despite widespread ideological conservatism, that even limited government can and should solve social problems.

It was Obama's appeal for unity—for one country, not a nation divided between red and blue states, and for politicians attacking problems rather than each other—that most struck a chord with the Danville audience. "The whole idea is that it shouldn't be 'us' and 'them,'" said Jean Riggs, 44, an independent for Obama. "We should all be working for the same goal, the best interests of our country in a peaceful world. I prefer this to 'we're going to beat them.'" And Judy Meyers, a hairdresser whose husband recently lost his job a few years before retirement, insisted: "There should only be one America. There shouldn't be rich and poor, but we're losing the middle class."

George Bush ran as a "uniter, not a divider," and Republicans, after catering to the rich at the expense of working-class Americans, regularly accuse any Democrat seeking a modicum of equity of launching "class war." Bush also cynically exploited national unity after 9/11 to promote war and the Patriot Act. But just as Democrats need to capture the flag away from the right, they need to win the argument that they represent both the national interest and a sense

of national community by serving the needs of the vast majority.

In his convention speech, Obama linked "faith in the possibilities of this nation" to America as "tolerant" and "generous." His critique of the present often is expressed as the need to do more—for example, for Maytag workers in Galesburg, Illinois, whose jobs are being shipped to Mexico and are left without prospects for employment or health insurance. In redefining the meaning of national unity, he argued, "it is that fundamental belief—I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper—that makes this country work. It's what allows us to pursue our individual dreams and yet still come together as one American family." In Obama's message, unity is not submission to authority, but rather solidarity. "People have more in common than separates them," he said to long applause at his Danville stop.

Conventional wisdom says that voters want to look forward to better days. But few politicians have as effectively evoked the "audacity of hope," as Obama felicitously expressed it (borrowing the phrase, as his splendid memoir—*Dreams of My Father*—indicates, from his minister in Chicago). Hope should be the essence of a progressive poli-

Obama has been "the go-to guy for anything progressive, whatever the cause."

tics, but too often the message of the left is mainly about how awful things are—jobs lost, inequality growing, casualties mounting from a fraudulent war. Yet a cheery emphasis on hope often ignores the real problems that must be confronted to make that hope realistic.

Likewise there is a risky ambiguity in celebrating America: It is not always clear whether political leaders are applauding America as it is or as it ought to be—or if they even acknowledge the difference. Partly, that ambiguity reflects a unique characteristic of American politics. Americanism is a vague but powerful ideology that obscures real differences of principle and, in the propaganda of the political right, can make criticism of American reality seem an attack on American ideas.

But it is nevertheless essential to define Americanism in progressive terms, as Obama tries to do. "I'd pick up arms right now to defend this country," he said in Danville, adroitly balancing patriotism and criticism of Bush foreign policy. "But if I'm going to ask someone else's son and daughter to go to war, I want to make sure it's the right war."

To his heartland audience, Obama affirmed "core values" of hard work, responsibility, family, community and faith—but insisted those values had to be expressed through government. The country deserves, he said, "a government as decent as the American people," providing a "decent shot" in life to everyone, "a hand up" when someone suffers a "bump on the road," a "job that pays a living wage," protection against going bankrupt from illness and college education even for individuals with little money.

Even such skillful rhetoric can't avoid hard policy choices. Despite his eloquence on healthcare, Obama rejects a unified national health insurance in favor of a more piecemeal approach that many progressives see as inadequate. And all the talk of one America can't erase the profound conflicts between the interests of big corporations and workers, the public and the common environment. Obama largely avoids full-frontal critiques of abusive corporate power and the growing class divide. Despite such shortcomings, his campaign points toward a new era, not just of racial politics but of progressive politics in search of a new majority. ■

Party Hacks

Continued from page 17

Land continues to enforce a 2000 law that has effectively barred thousands of college students from voting. The *Detroit Free Press* reported in 2002 that in its first two years, the law dissuaded thousands of student voters from registering near campus, cutting voter rolls by 10 percent in East Lansing and 8 percent in Ann Arbor. The law already has claimed one high-profile casualty: Democrat Dianne Byrum lost her race for Congress to conservative Mike Rogers by 88 votes in a district that included the liberal college town of East Lansing. As a state legislator, Rogers was both sponsor of the law and its foremost beneficiary.

- In Colorado, Secretary of State Donetta Davidson faces embarrassment over her leadership in the Elections Center, a nominally nonpartisan state office that has accepted donations from e-voting companies at the same time it touted their machinery. She also backed the scheme, shot down in state court, to allow partisan redrawing of congressional districts in 2003.
- In South Dakota, Secretary of State Chris Nelson is facing lawsuits from Lakota tribes for posting erroneous warning signs at polling places during the June 1 special election for Congress.

Jacqueline Johnson of the National Congress of American Indians told the *New York Times* that several ballot locations displayed signs reading "No ID, no vote." Many would-be voters went home feeling intimidated by election monitors who did

not inform them of their right to complete an affidavit, which, even with no ID, would allow them to cast a ballot. (HAVA allows for provisional ballots for voters who don't provide ID or fill out an affidavit, these are much more likely to be disqualified than regular ballots.)

The ploy apparently worked. Fewer Lakota turned out to vote than in 2002, when counties with high percentages of Indians saw participation rates soar in a Senate brawl in which the White House jumped in to oust Democratic incumbent Tim Johnson. In a dramatic 11th-hour turn, those counties were among the last to report their totals, and their margins reversed a small lead for Republican John Thune and gave Johnson a narrow win.

- In Ohio, Secretary of State Ken Blackwell has gone several extra miles to endorse a federal constitutional amendment to ban marriage for same-sex couples. In July, before a failed cloture vote doomed the GOP proposal, Blackwell flew to Washington to rally senators—despite his duty in the Buckeye State to impartially oversee the validation of signatures on petitions submitted to place a question before voters this fall about amending the state constitution to ban gay marriage.
- In Florida, GOP mischief with voting rolls is making perhaps the most glaring mockery of fair play and open government. Harris' successor Glenda Hood remains embroiled in fallout from her bid to pare 47,000 supposed felons from the state voter lists. Recent disclosures show that Hood's list wrongly excluded hundreds of Latino felons, who, in Florida, often back GOP candidates, while it included hundreds of African-American felons who had won restoration of their voting rights. Newspapers investigated and spotted the list's inherent partisan bias after a judge ordered the list be made public, and Governor Jeb Bush retracted it.

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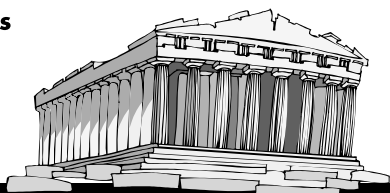
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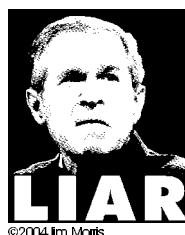
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Many voters, like *St. Petersburg Times* columnist Howard Troxler, found their amazement commingled with anger. "They do not get to stand there week after week, all self-righteous, declaring that anybody who questions their list is a fool," Troxler wrote in July. Does this mean, he asked, that Jeb Bush is "gonna get our \$2 million back or fire somebody?"

Like hawks who soften when loved ones get in harm's way, even the most brazen advocates of election barriers sing a different tune after facing Election Day stop signs. After his brush with exclusion from the voter rolls, Kit Bond told the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, "I tell you what. Voting is not easy." ■



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Sum of a Glitch

Continued from page 21

- Allow the press, and any citizen, to audit if they pay for it. If they discover that the election was miscounted, reimburse them. Find ways to do these audits inexpensively.
- Allow each party to select a handful of precincts to hand-audit. Discretionary audits shine light into any precincts deemed suspicious.
- Require audits for insufficient randomness (e.g., three candidates each get 18,881 votes; voters arrived in alphabetical order).
- Require that the audit be expanded if discrepancies are spotted, whether or not the discrepancy would overturn the election.
- When voting machines miscount, require that fact be disclosed. If it is the fault of the vendor, require such failures to be disclosed to prospective buyers.
- Consider a 100 percent audit of the paper ballots. It may be easier and cheaper to do a 100 percent audit than to counter the political tricks that will arise when we introduce judgment (like what constitutes an "anomaly") into a robust spot-checking procedure.

Taking back our vote is not something we can depend on others to do for us. This requires the top talent we have. Nothing less will do. This job needs you.

What are we fighting for? Simply this, and we must accept nothing less: We want voting systems to produce voter-verified paper ballots, and those ballots must be considered the legal record when used for recounts and audits. We must use robust fraud-detering auditing methods, and we must place a much higher priority on catching and correcting software miscounts.

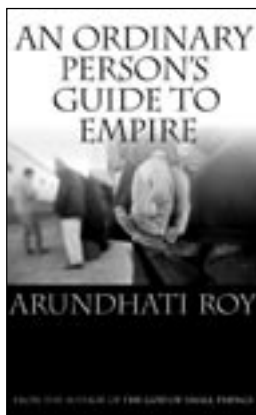
We need a temporary interim solution, so we can be confident that our votes are secure in the next elections. We also need a long-term solution, a bill passed by Congress.

We need to develop public policy, auditing procedures, and tamper-proof voting machines based on input from experts in a variety of fields, and we must not allow our collective common sense to be overridden by profit motives, or the desire to save face because of past mistakes. ■

BEV HARRIS is executive director of Black Box Voting (www.blackboxvoting.org), a nonprofit consumer protection group for elections. She is author of Black Box Voting, now available from Talion, from which this article was excerpted.

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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

GOOD NEWS--SPARKY SEEMS TO HAVE RECOVERED FROM HIS HEAD INJURY!

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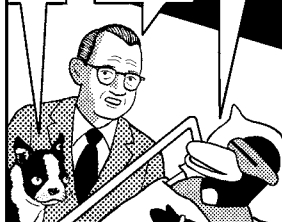
--ACTUALLY, PEOPLE ARE PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO A GROUP OF WELL-FUNDED POLITICAL OPERATIVES WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM AT THE SAME TIME AS JOHN KERRY!

THEY SAY HIS WAR RECORD HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT EXAGGERATED!



I HAVE NO IDEA HOW I ENDED UP THERE...THE LAST THING I REMEMBER IS WALKING DOWN THE STREET WITH BLINKY AND GETTING HIT ON THE HEAD WITH SOMETHING...THE LAST FIVE MONTHS ARE A TOTAL BLANK...

AHEM. YES. WELL.



UH--LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT. BUSH AVOIDED VIETNAM ENTIRELY BY PULLING STRINGS TO GET INTO THE NATIONAL GUARD--AND THEN WENT AWOL--

--WHILE JOHN KERRY WENT TO VIETNAM--AND WAS DECORATED FIVE TIMES--

--AND REPUBLICANS ARE TRYING TO MAKE AN ISSUE OUT OF KERRY'S RECORD?



SO WHAT DID I MISS? HAS RUMSFELD RESIGNED? IS CHENEY UNDER INVESTIGATION? HAS BUSH'S FAILURE TO REPORT FOR NATIONAL GUARD DUTY IN ALABAMA BECOME A MAJOR CAMPAIGN ISSUE?

ER--



I SEE I'VE GOT SOME CATCHING UP TO DO.

OH, DID I MENTION THAT YOU'VE BEEN A REPUBLICAN FOR THE LAST FIVE MONTHS?



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After great fortunes were made in Victorian-era industrialization in America, wage earners, such as these Massachusetts railway workers, suffered when work became scarce.

BY JEFFERSON DECKER

The Statistical Christs

In the decades following the Civil War, the northern half of the United States experienced massive social transformation. Large-scale manufacturing took off, European immigrants poured into cities and the ranks of industrial wage laborers exploded.

When the economy boomed, a handful of men made great fortunes in railroads, steel and finance. When the economy stumbled, workers had few options. Previous generations of white Americans tended to be artisans or small farmers who could subsist off the land or family during hard times. Wage laborers, on the other hand, suffered immediate deprivation when work became scarce. They took to the road in search of jobs and sought out charity when none could be found.

In *The New Victorians*, Stephen Pimpare describes how this transformation set off a debate about economics, inequality and poverty. On one side, struggling workers pressed for a generous system of public relief to ameliorate the extremes of the new economy. Often, they found allies among elected officials who were anxious to please their working-class constituents and build urban political

machines. In Philadelphia, public relief spending doubled between 1850 and 1870. In New York City, expenditures doubled during the 1860s alone. But this expansion also faced a concerted counter-attack in the 1870s and 1880s, from a group of intellectuals, political reformers and charities. Through a network of Charity Organization Societies, the reformers sought to make poor relief rational, scientific—and stingy. Robert Treat Paine of Boston gave the group its motto: "Not Alms, but a Friend."

The debate turned on a simple question: What causes poverty? Advocates of public assistance blamed economic factors: Deprivation happened when the economy failed to provide jobs. Accordingly, those who profited most from the economic system had a responsibility to help those who could not find enough work. The Charity Organization Societies told a different story. Poverty, their

members insisted, was a moral failure on the part of the poor. As Mrs. Glendower Evans argued at a charity conference in 1889, “Too often it will be found that the root of the evil lies in the character of the poor themselves—in habits of laziness, shiftlessness, intemperance or vice, which have reduced them to an irregular and meagre subsistence.”

The Charity Organization Societies pressed private charities to focus on moral reform rather than simply provide aid and argued that government-run public assistance was counterproductive. “Indiscriminate almsgiving is a crime against society,” complained reformer William Slocum in 1882. Reformers promoted this message through conferences, journals and the popular press—most of them underwritten by wealthy employers. The effort paid off. By the late 1890s, 39 of the 50 largest U.S. cities had reconfigured cash assistance programs to reduce amounts of public aid and subsidize moral reform. As the

**The New Victorians:
Poverty, Politics,
and Propaganda in
Two Gilded Ages**
Stephen Pimpare
The New Press
304 Pages, \$25.95

poet John Boyle O’Reilly wrote, in verse, “organized charity scrimped and iced / in the name of a cautious, statistical Christ.”

Alongside this history, Pimpare draws parallels with its 20th Century counterpart: the campaign against welfare that culminated in the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. Like the charity reform movement, the anti-welfare forces were organized and bankrolled by a group of wealthy individuals and institutions, such as the Coors and Olin foundations. They too built a network of organizations to share infor-

mation and make a case to the public. And they made the morality of the poor—a question that had receded from view during the New Deal through the Great Society—central to the debate. Anti-welfare authors such as Charles Murray in *Losing Ground* demonized “welfare mothers” for laziness and bearing children out of wedlock. And they blamed federal public assistance programs, especially Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), for creating a “welfare trap” that kept recipients in poverty and promoted anti-social values. These “new Victorians” got many of their wishes in 1996, when Congress voted to abolish AFDC, drive down caseloads through punitive sanctions and replace federal guarantees with block grants to state governments.

Pimpare offers a defense of generous public assistance programs on the grounds that they benefit all working-class people. Aid gives a worker with a marginal income an option—the opportunity to avoid the labor market when it pays too little or proves demeaning and the so-called “marriage market” when potential spouses are abusive or inadequate. This, Pimpare argues, boosts incomes across the low-wage workforce because employers must offer higher wages to find employees. “American businesses, especially those that needed low-wage, low-skilled workers, clearly understood the economic benefits of welfare reform just as their counterparts had over a century ago.” Too often, welfare reform simply means replacing union workers with “workfare” recipients making sub-minimum wages.

There is considerable truth to this argument, but I think it should come with significant qualification. Opposition to U.S. welfare policy as it existed before 1996 did not come exclusively from the corporate-funded conservative propagandists profiled by Pimpare. Some

liberals worried that providing long-term public assistance to healthy adults violated norms of fair play and mutual responsibility that they used to defend other redistributive public policies. Others thought that the specific design of AFDC created economic incentives—for example, to take under-the-table work that could be hidden from welfare agencies instead of jobs in the formal economy—with unfortunate social consequences. Still others believed (incorrectly) that welfare mostly served African-Americans and resented it on racist grounds. By turning the entire debate into a contest between neo-Victorians and their ideological opposites, Pimpare fails to address the public opinion in between. As a result, he never explains why AFDC proved so vulnerable to attack in the first place.

After all, AFDC was not the only government program to face a concerted propaganda assault in the past few decades. But conservatives have been much less successful at undermining public support for, say, minimum

wage laws—even though they impact low-wage labor markets directly. Nor have numerous think-tank campaigns succeeded in demolishing Social Security or doing away entirely with environmental protection or workplace safety legislation. (Indeed, the substantial regulatory and welfare state that grew up in the mid-20th century made the wage effects of the 1996 welfare reform far less significant than the cutbacks of public aid in the 19th century were.) It is worth wondering why attacks on AFDC led to its abolition while many other government programs have withstood, thus far, the concerted attack on so-called big government. Doing so might produce a more complicated and ambiguous history of policymaking in the late 20th century. But it could also help advocates of generous public aid design the kind of programs that can withstand the inevitable counterattacks from the right. ■

JEFFERSON DECKER is a Ph.D. candidate in American history at Columbia University.

ART SPACE



Artist **Randolph Sill** worked with Seattle-area teens to create the **casket project**, creating a ceramic casket for each American casualty in Iraq. Daily reports of the dead had “a new and ominous meaning for us,” Sill said. “Getting accustomed to hearing about the loss of just a few American lives each day was not acceptable. We could not imagine the tragedy associated with even a single casket.” Today there are more than 951 U.S. dead in Iraq.



The Roots perform in New York's City Hall Park, July 14, 2004.

BY CHRIS BLOSE

Up From the Wackness

Philadelphia's The Roots have spent 13 years banging out organic hip-hop with real instruments and unquestionable swagger. They've also spent 13 years asking—consciously or not—the following question:

Can you be sonic pioneers with a radical sensibility and still get the club bumping?

The Roots have successfully straddled the border between underground heroes and mainstream dabblers, all leading to their latest release, *The Tipping Point*. A better question might be this: How well do The Roots combine traits seemingly at odds with each other, balance club hits with street credibility and mix hip-hop braggadocio with intelligent commentary?

The answers depend on the album. On their previous release, 2002's *Phrenology*, the band simultaneously chased the slippery hit single and pushed its instrumental experimentation. Witness how that single, "Break You Off," led strangely into "Wa-

ter," a sprawling work of gritty autobiography and musical meandering. But recording "Break You Off" was an unpleasant ordeal involving huge expenditures and rotating singers, all for a catchphrase single easily skipped over to get to the good stuff.

There was plenty of good stuff. The lo-fi, jangly guitar anthem "The Seed" ended up being the more interesting single, and the album's finest moment came with "Thought at Work," a stripped-down rhythmic assault over which MC Black Thought spewed with frenetic energy.

That same setup provides the high point on *The Tipping Point*, in a combination of two songs, "Web" and "Boom!" On this old school pair, drummer Questlove does what he does best, laying

down wickedly crisp beats, while bassist Leonard Hubbard displays restraint with his sparse low-end kidney punches. All the space on "Web" gives Black Thought plenty of rhythmic room to mix politics and bluster: "With a portrait of Malcolm X on the door / while I'm eating MCs like a carnivore." Then, on "Boom!," he assumes different personalities for each verse.

The Tipping Point likewise reveals a band comfortable with schizophrenia. If *Phrenology* played like a disjointed sampler, *The Tipping Point* plays more like a proficient DJ's mix. The album starts with a laidback semi-cover of Sly and the Family Stone's "Everybody is a Star," which ends with jazzy instrumental slinkiness

and leads into the inevitable spoken-word piece. The latter serves as a call to arms: "Art has not been drowned and life music / will thrust its branches up from the mud of wackness."

What's impressive is that such a potentially pretentious moment moves perfectly into "I Don't Care," a simplified guitar and bass funk romp. The hook is infectious and ridiculous, all about thumping bass, banging drum lines and blowing you away. Black Thought seems well aware that no matter his intended message, such catchy hooks and danceable music are what people want from commercial rap. As he says: "You don't give a fuck you wanna pump the volume." That song leads into the album's first single, "Don't Say Nuthin'," on which he takes this indifference to meaning to its laughable extreme by unintelligibly mumbling the first half of each hook.

If such thematic and musical transitions give *The Tipping Point* a unified feel, so does the way it builds. "Star" humbly starts a crescendo that peaks with "Web" and "Boom!" It's as if Black Thought's just awoken on "Star," but caffeine-sharp by mid-album. He offers plenty of party-pumping boastfulness, but he also takes topical jabs at the state of the nation on "Guns are Drawn" and "Why?" From the latter: "Young teen joins the marines, says he'll die for the corps / inducted up into the government's war as if the land of money and oil / funny how ain't none of it yours."

Music's not all serious business for The Roots, though, and the songs here are as likely to make heads nod as to mess with them. *The Tipping Point* proves that The Roots are still comfortable questioning their own mixed identity. They let the music provide the answers. ■

CHRIS BLOSE is a freelance writer in Columbia, Missouri.

BY MICHAEL ATKINSON

Spin's the Thing

How much credit, exactly, does Jonathan Demme's remake of John Frankenheimer's 1962 paranoid-nation classic *The Manchurian Candidate* get for being the most extravagantly Chomskyite movie Hollywood

has ever made? Perhaps not so much—the new movie swaps villainous Sino-Soviet brainwashers for mercenary multinational corporations, but this isn't the thunder strike it might've been a few years ago. The peach pit of Our Man Noam's four decades of activism has been the ultimate culpability of corporations for virtually every social ill, economic injustice and governmental policy. And even as recently as a decade ago, this was absurd, Bizarro-world news for both the media and the citizenry.

But today the public sphere all but entirely accepts the notion that big business pulls the majority of governmental strings. (A recent *Washington Post*/ABC poll found 62 percent of Americans now believe "large business corporations have too much influence on the Bush administration." Large corporations like ABC-owner Disney?) Voices in the media, of course, still feign flabbergasted dismay at the thought. And the public trusts them less, too, less than they ever have. Who would've thought we'd live to see it happen: The furious rivulet of Noam Chomsky has met and merged with the mainstream.

To what degree this seepage

The Manchurian Candidate
Directed by
Jonathan Demme

into the populi water table matters at election time is, by definition, irrelevant—both political parties are brokerage houses for multinational investment, and everyone knows it. (This year, we are faced with an apparent choice between the Carlyle Group-Halliburton combo, which has sustained virtually the entirety of the Bush administration, and the Heinz Company, to which Teresa Heinz Kerry has no linkage whatsoever.) Similarly, Demme's movie is nonpartisan: The words "Republican" and "Democrat" are never uttered during the story's twisty, over-baked challah of sleeper espionage, mind control, impromptu assassination plots and electioneering flimflam. That all politicians are fiendish scofflaws is a given, as is their role as lackeys greasing the money chutes of big business. (Older corporate-evil movies—like 1974's *The Parallax View*—play the flipside, with corporations serving governmental conspiracies.) Given this much, the film gains weight like a

rolling snowball the closer we get to November.

The historical template upon which the film is based (McCarthy-hunt context, Richard Condon novel, Sinatra-starring filmization, Dealey Plaza prophecy) is well-trod cultural terrain, and the ways and means Demme and his screenwriters employ to update the material are indisputably witty. Still, the revamped *Candidate*, for all of its neurotic agon and sci-fi MacGuffins, is simply not news. In fact, even as outrageous metaphor it pales beside the real deal.

The fact that Demme's evil empire resorts to covertly installed brain implants in order to maneuver a pliable Mortimer Snerd into the White House implies a cartoonish ignorance that comes off something less than frightening. Isn't it creepier, because it's more genuine, to consider that the octopus of CEOs and politicians can do the same thing simply by lying and astutely expecting us to believe what they say?

Demme's film suggests that the primary barrier to shepherding an amoral dimwit into the presidency is that same dimwit's unpredictable rectitude and individualism. But since when has there been a shortage of bottom-feeders

happy to take power in the name of profit? Why hardwire a politician for amoral order-taking rather than merely provide him with the opportunity? In the new *Candidate*, which mucks around with the raw rituals of elections more than the original needed to, the voters are seen as merely screaming Beatles fans, already slaves to cult-of-personality advertising. Therein lies the elephant-in-the-room Demme and crew overlooked: propaganda.

Overt, subliminal or obscuratist, it does the work of a million scalpel-brandishing brainwashers, and it leaves no scars. The real villain of the piece, public relations—"spin"—message marketing, already controls the American sensibility. Who needs assassination conspiracies? There's little question that the corporate cabal would mind-screw honest American soldiers and future leaders with secret techno-nastiness if they had to. But they don't. Demme would've voyaged into altogether more symbolically loaded dystopian waters if his scenario involved the invasive skull-manipulation of voters.

All the same, *The Manchurian Candidate* is an absolute freak among summer movie releases, and a redoubtable salvo in this amazing Year of Radical Movie Chic. It is best judged, for the time being at least, as a statement of outrage, an ephemeral act of intervention—after the 2004 election it may struggle for significance, without even a savvy relationship with its own cultural past to rescue it. Who knows if it will change minds; outrageously questioning the essence of political imagery may be enough for now. ■

MICHAEL ATKINSON is a film critic for *The Village Voice* and most recently the author of *One Hundred Children Waiting for a Train*.

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Garrison Keillor

Continued from back page

boys, shrieking midgets of AM radio, tax cheats, nihilists in golf pants, brownshirts in pinstripes, sweatshop tycoons, hacks, fakirs, aggressive dorks, Lamborghini libertarians, people who believe Neil Armstrong's moonwalk was filmed in Roswell, New Mexico, little honkers out to diminish the rest of us, Newt's evil spawn and their Etch-A-Sketch president, a dull and rigid man suspicious of the free flow of information and of secular institutions, whose philosophy is a jumble of badly sutured body parts trying to walk. Republicans: The No.1 reason the rest of the world thinks we're deaf, dumb and dangerous.

Rich ironies abound! Lies pop up like toadstools in the forest! Wild swine crowd round the public trough! Outrageous gerrymandering! Pocket lining on a massive scale! Paid lobbyists sit in committee rooms and write legislation to alleviate the suffering of billionaires! Hypocrisies shine like cat turds in the moonlight! O Mark Twain, where art thou at this hour? Arise and behold the Gilded Age reincarnated gaudier than ever, upholding great wealth as the sure sign of Divine Grace.

Here in 2004, George W. Bush is running for reelection on a platform of tragedy—the single greatest failure of national defense in our history, the attacks of 9/11 in which 19 men with box cutters put this nation into a tailspin, a failure the details of which the White House fought to keep secret even as it ran the country into hock up to the hubcaps, thanks to generous tax cuts for the well-fixed, hoping to lead us into a box canyon of debt that will render government impotent, even as we engage in a war against a small country that was undertaken for the president's personal satisfaction but sold to the American public on the basis of brazen misinformation, a war whose purpose is to distract us from an enormous transfer of wealth taking place in this country, flowing upward, and the deception is working beautifully.

The concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few is the death knell of democracy. No republic in the history of humanity has survived this. The election of 2004 will say something about what happens to ours. The omens are not good.

Our beloved land has been fogged with fear—fear, the greatest political strategy ever. An ominous silence, distant sirens, a drumbeat of whispered warnings and alarms to keep the public uneasy and silence the opposition. And in a time of vague fear, you can appoint bullet-brained judges, strip the bark off the Constitution, eviscerate federal regulatory agencies, bring

public education to a standstill, stupefy the press, lavish gorgeous tax breaks on the rich.

There is a stink drifting through this election year. It isn't the Florida recount or the Supreme Court decision. No, it's 9/11 that we keep coming back to. It wasn't the "end of innocence," or a turning point in our history, or a cosmic occurrence, it was an event, a lapse of security. And patriotism shouldn't prevent people from asking hard questions of the man who was purportedly in charge of national security at the time.

Whenever I think of those New Yorkers hurrying along Park Place or getting off the No.1 Broadway local, hustling toward their office on the 90th floor, the morning paper under their arms, I think of that non-reader George W. Bush and how he hopes to exploit those people with a little economic uptick, maybe the capture of Osama, cruise to victory in November and proceed to get some serious nation-changing done in his second term.

This year, as in the past, Republicans will portray us Democrats as embittered academics, desiccated Unitarians, whacked-out hippies and communards, people who talk to telephone poles, the party of the Deadheads. They will wave enormous flags and wow over and over the footage of firemen in the wreckage of the World Trade Center and bodies being carried out and they will lie about their economic policies with astonishing enthusiasm.

The Union is what needs defending this year. Government of Enron and by Halliburton and for the Southern Baptists is not the same as what Lincoln spoke of. This gang of *Pithecanthropus Republicanii* has humbugged us to death on terrorism and tax cuts for the comfy and school prayer and flag burning and claimed the right to know what books we read and to dump their sewage upstream from the town and clear-cut the forests and gut the IRS and mark up the constitution on behalf of intolerance and promote the corporate takeover of the public airwaves and to hell with anybody who opposes them.

This is a great country, and it wasn't made so by angry people. We have a sacred duty to bequeath it to our grandchildren in better shape than however we found it. We have a long way to go and we're not getting any younger.

Dante said that the hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who in time of crisis remain neutral, so I have spoken my piece, and thank you, dear reader. It's a beautiful world, rain or shine, and there is more to life than winning. ■

GARRISON KEILLOR is the host and writer of *A Prairie Home Companion*, now in its 25th year on the air. This adapted excerpt from Keillor's new book, *Homegrown Democrat* (© 2004) is reprinted by arrangement with Viking, a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.



We're Not in Lake Wobegon Anymore

By Garrison Keillor



How did the Party of Lincoln and Liberty transmogrify into the party of Newt Gingrich's evil spawn and their Etch-A-Sketch president, a dull and rigid man, whose philosophy is a jumble of badly sutured body parts trying to walk?

SOMETHING HAS GONE SERIOUSLY haywire with the Republican Party. Once, it was the party of pragmatic Main Street businessmen in steel-rimmed spectacles who decried profligacy and waste, were devoted to their communities and supported the sort of prosperity that raises all ships. They were good-hearted people who vanquished the gnarlier elements of their party, the paranoid Roosevelt-haters, the flat Earthers and Prohibitionists, the antipapist antiforeigner element. The genial Eisenhower was their man, a genuine American hero of D-Day, who made it OK for reasonable people to vote Republican. He brought the Korean War to a stalemate, produced the Interstate Highway System, declined to rescue the French colonial army in Vietnam, and gave us a period of peace and prosperity, in which (oddly) American arts and letters flourished and higher education burgeoned—and there was a degree of plain decency in the country. Fifties Republicans were giants compared to today's. Richard Nixon was the last Republican leader to feel a Christian obligation toward the poor.

In the years between Nixon and Newt Gingrich, the party migrated southward down the Twisting Trail

of Rhetoric and sneered at the idea of public service and became the Scourge of Liberalism, the Great Crusade Against the Sixties, the Death Star of Government, a gang of pirates that diverted and fascinated the media by their sheer chutzpah, such as the misty-eyed flag-waving of Ronald Reagan who, while George McGovern flew bombers in World War II, took a pass and made training films in Long Beach. The Nixon moderate vanished like the passenger pigeon, purged by a legion of angry white men who rose to power on pure punk politics. "Bipartisanship is another term of date rape," says Grover Norquist, the Sid Vicious of the GOP. "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub." The boy has Oedipal problems and government is his daddy.

The party of Lincoln and Liberty was transmogrified into the party of hairy-backed swamp developers and corporate shills, faith-based economists, fundamentalist bullies with Bibles, Christians of convenience, freelance racists, misanthropic frat

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